

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1-10. (Cancelled)

11. (Previously Presented) An occupant restraint mechanism disposed between a rigid member and an instrument panel of an automotive vehicle, said occupant restraint mechanism comprising:

first and second brackets having spaced apart side walls, each of said first and second brackets including a web that extends between said side walls to define a generally U-shaped cross section, each of said side walls extending between an open edge and said web, each of said first and second brackets extending arcuately between opposite proximal and distal ends, said proximal end having a flange to allow said first and second brackets to be welded to the rigid member, said distal end having an end wall extending between said side walls, each end wall having an aperture formed therein to allow said distal ends of said first and second brackets to be fixedly secured to the instrument panel;

one of said first and second brackets having at least one notch formed therein, said notch having a predetermined size to allow a predetermined amount of deformation of said first and second brackets during contact of an occupant with the instrument panel during a sudden deceleration of the vehicle, said notch being formed in at least one of said side walls of said one of said first and second brackets, said

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notch being formed along said open edge and extending in a concave manner toward said web;

one of said pair of brackets being positioned in the vicinity of the occupant's knees to minimize intrusion of the knees through the instrument panel;

one of said pair of brackets being disposed below the other such that the pair of brackets deform in a successive manner to minimize during contact between the occupant's knees and the instrument panel during sudden deceleration of the vehicle, thereby minimizing loading of the occupant's femurs.

12. (New) An occupant restraint mechanism as set forth in claim 11, wherein said side walls are generally parallel.

13. (New) An occupant restraint mechanism as set forth in claim 11, wherein said notch extends through a portion of said at least one of said side walls of said one of said first and second brackets.